The Eye-Witness

By James Hay, Jr.

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EVEN after you have read this story, you will, in all probability, still refuse to believe that Thomson Harleigh saw the murder of George Nelson. But, because a lawyer and a physician believe it, and because I am ready to take my oath to its truth, I set it down as a warning against the defects in our criminal procedure — defects which may again, as they have done in the past, result in the execution of an innocent man.

If Dr. Brumair had known less about hypnotism, or if Harleigh had been a different personality, the thing would never have happened. The doctor was a marvel with hypnosis. I knew it, and Hamilton, who is a lawyer, and Nelson, who was a millionaire with nothing to do but stay up all one night and sleep all the next, knew it. We had seen some of his experiments with Harleigh, a clever fellow who had womanish black eyes and an absurd love for cigars.

Of late, however, the doctor had been experimenting without us as spectators, and we welcomed his promise to give us what he called remarkable experiences.

"You shall see," he said with vast enthusiasm, "a man sitting in my library, but you shall hear him describe what he sees and hears miles away. I tell you I can send Harleigh anywhere! He has lain on my couch here in Washington and gone into raptures over the perfume of violets a Greek was peddling on Sixth avenue in New York. At first, I scarcely believed it myself, but it's true. You shall see."

Brumair, who is French and excitable and thin, ran his fingers through his hair and laughed his nervous elation.

A week later Hamilton and I joined Harleigh in the doctor's library. Nelson had not arrived, and after a wait of nearly an hour, Brumair put Harleigh to sleep.

"Nelson's probably at home catching up the sleep he didn't get last night," suggested Hamilton. "Send Harleigh there to find out."

"Good!" agreed Brumair, and proceeded to put his subject into a deeper sleep. Hamilton filled and lit his pipe, passing me the burning match for my cigarette. It was then about a quarter past ten o'clock. Outside, the month of March was dying hard, the wind rattling the loose shutters, and occasionally coming down the chimney to blow little puffs of smoke into the room from the open fireplace.

"Harleigh," began the doctor in the clear, slow, incisive tone he always used in commanding his subjects, "go to George Nelson's house and tell us what he is doing."

After a silence of half a minute, Harleigh, who was seated comfortably in a big leather chair, straightened up, a look of annoyance on his face. His eyes were closed. Almost immediately he spoke in a relieved tone:

"I'm in front of the house now. Missed my way first. Got into the wrong block."

His voice was as it always was in ordinary conversation.

"Are you sure it's Nelson's house?" asked Brumair slowly.

"Sure."

"Ever been there before?"

"Once before. It's all dark now. No lights anywhere. I can't get in. The door's locked."

Brumair flung off his coat.

"See here, Harleigh!" he exclaimed roughly, but continued in his slow, even tone: "You go in. Locks makes no difference to you. Do you understand? You can go in."

It is to the doctor's credit that all through the scene which followed he preserved his self-control and made his tone exactly that which he used in less remarkable tests.

"But it's so dark," objected Harleigh after a pause, during which he had sat perfectly still in the chair.

"You can see now, and you will have no trouble with the darkness," said the doctor.

"Yes, I can see," the other agreed reluctantly.

In the silence that followed, Hamilton got up and stood puffing his pipe rapidly, his back to the fire. I watched Brumair. With coat off and hair disheveled, he was working hard—strung tight as a wire. None of us was prepared for what Harleigh said.

"I'm afraid to go in. Hanged if I'm not afraid!" He said it querulously, as if he had stood in front of the house trying to overcome his fear and could not explain it to himself.

"You are not afraid," prompted Brumair. "You will go in, and you will not wake up until I tell you. You—are—not—at—all—afraid. Go in."

"I'm inside now," replied Harleigh. "Say, this must be an old house. George! how it rattles! The wind sounds like a battle."

"Is there a light down-stairs?"

The figure in the leather chair bent forward, the face showing acute attention, as if the hypnotized man listened with all his soul. Then he answered the question in a slow, strained whisper that printed on our minds the picture of a cautious, furtive watcher.

"No—no light. But there's a man here in the hall. He just came through the door at the back. I think— Wait; he's going toward the staircase."

"Watch him! Watch him and follow him."

Harleigh began to whisper again, his words quick and nervous, but so low that we three stood close over him to watch them. Although he had not said it in so many words, we knew the man he saw, more than a mile away in Nelson's house, meant mischief.

"He's on the stairs now. He's slow, tiptoeing, afraid of every step. No use in that. Nobody could hear a board creak in this thundering wind. The fellow's a thief. That's what he is. He's gone up only three steps."

He paused. I heard Hamilton draw in a deep breath, like a man who has been afraid to breathe for fear of missing an indistinct word. Brumair, watchful as a cat, kept his eyes on Harleigh, who was still crouched forward in the chair, watching.

"Describe this man," was the next order.

"He's a middle-sized fellow. His hair's yellow—very thin hair. Wears gold eyeglasses. Clean-shaven. Blue eyes. He's got watery eyes. Huh!" he broke off suddenly with a half chuckle that sounded uncanny to us. "I talk like a police-circular description of an escaped convict."

"Go on," commanded Brumair, sterner than before.

"There's a pimple—no; it's a mole—on his upper lip just below the outside point of his right nostril. He's got catarrh. I can tell by the way he breathes."

"How about his hands?" Brumair himself was whispering now.

"Small and white. The thumb and forefinger of his right hand are discolored. No rings on. Hold on! There's a monogram on his cuff-button. I can't make out—Yes; it's a 'D.' and 'M.' and 'C.' That's it—'D. M. C.' That thumb and forefinger look permanently discolored, very dark. He's so slow!"

Hamilton interrupted, putting a heavy hand on Brumair's shoulder.

"This may mean trouble," he said, his coarse, bass voice involuntarily lowered to a half whisper, "and we'll need all this. Tell him to remember it when he wakes up."

The doctor saw the necessity of it.

"Harleigh," he ordered, "you will remember all this after I wake you up, everything you have seen and are seeing and will see this evening—everything."

The head nodded obedience. The mouth continued:

"He's upstairs at last—going toward the door at the front end of the hall. Hush! What was that? Sounded like a chair thrown over on the floor beneath. Must have been the wind. It scared this fellow all right.

"We can hear somebody snoring. It's a man—George, I guess."

I heard Hamilton bite through the amber mouthpiece of his pipe. The bowl of it fell to Harleigh's knee, scattering gray ashes over his leg and clattering to the floor. It startled Hamilton from a trance. He sprang to the telephone and clawed the pages of the directory, looking for Nelson's number. He was the first to remember, in the gruesome fascination of the scene, that George was in peril.

"This fellow's breathing hard," Harleigh took up his description. "His mouth's open. Every time the wind roars, it frightens him.

"He's at George's door now. I think it's George's. He's opening the door slowly—slowly."

Above Harleigh's cautious whisper I could hear Hamilton roaring into the telephone:

"North seventy-seven twenty-one! North seven—seven—two—one!" I don't think Brumair heard him.

"We're inside the room," Harleigh was saying. He had been agitated before, but now he started and shuddered like a man compelled to witness another's danger without being able to aid him. "It's George, all right. There's a bar of light on the ceiling from the street lamp outside. This fellow can see him plain as day.

"What's that? Sounds like a bell. It's the telephone. It's hurrying this fellow. He tipped to the head of the bed now. George is lying on his back, his left arm above his head, his right under the coverings."

Hamilton, the receiver at his ear, joggled the hook with his clinched fist and swore at the telephone girl when he asked her why she did not get his number. Then he said roughly:

"Keep on ringing! Ring and ring until you get an answer!"

"He's got a pistol—pulled it from his breast pocket." Harleigh spoke in a voice of hate. Beads of sweat stood out on his forehead, which was white as pure marble. Brumair's collar was limp with perspiration. He looked like a wild man.

"He's putting his left hand under George's pillow—very slowly, very carefully. His right holds the revolver close to George's head. That telephone bell is ringing all the time, but George can't hear it."

Hamilton dropped the receiver, throwing the whole apparatus from the table to the floor, and dashed out of the room. Brumair, panting, quivering, gave no sign of knowing he had gone.

"George is waking up! He's grabbed the fellow—by the throat!" Harleigh made his whisper a song of thanksgiving.

In another moment he had sprung from his chair, whispering no longer. He shrieked out the words:

"George is shot! The fellow put the pistol to his temple and shot him!"

"Watch the fellow." Brumair gently forced Harleigh back into the chair. "Tell me what he does."

"He jerked something from under the pillow. It's a package—no; a wallet. He's slipped it into his breast pocket."

Harleigh spoke in his natural tone now, only his voice was full of the eagerness of pursuit. Brumair had fallen to his knees and was wringing his hands, one on the other, like a beggar. He looked like a man who has been overworked and is about to collapse.

"He's running—down the steps—back down the hall through the same door. He's jumped through an open window into the back yard—and through the gate into the alley. He's turning into Columbia Road, and—"

"Nelson may be dying, Brumair!" I broke in, and I had to handle him roughly to get his attention. "Man alive, we must go to him!"

He gazed at me fixedly for a moment, only half comprehending. I was already at the door. He turned to Harleigh and said wearily:

"You're all right now. Wake up."

They caught up with me at the street door. Brumair, struggling into his coat, was blubbering like a woman, for he had loved Nelson.

"You made me wake him up before he'd followed the fellow!" he groaned. "Such an ass I was!"

"We took a street-car, rode two blocks in that, leaped from it while it was going full speed, and caught a taxicab for the rest of the way. Hamilton had arrived ahead of us and called the police. We found him, five patrolmen and a lieutenant of the force standing, an awed group, looking helplessly at the body of George Nelson, who had died from a bullet in his left temple.

"What's the use of standing here?" Hamilton broke out savagely. "Why don't you notify the coroner and look for the murderer?"

The lieutenant ordered his men to search.

"Start from Columbia Road," put in Harleigh eagerly. "He turned into that from the alley. He left by a back window, which you'll find still open."

"How do you know?" asked the lieutenant.

"I was an eye-witness of the crime. I saw him."

"You saw him!"

"Yes; he saw him," supplemented Brumair, whose limp collar was far from impressive.

"Where were you?" The lieutenant was now evidently anxious for the information.

"Right here—in this very room," answered Harleigh.

"Can you describe the man who did the shooting?"

Harleigh repeated, word for word, the description he had given us earlier in the evening. When he had heard it, the lieutenant blew his whistle, calling the men back, and repeated it to them. They reported that they had found the back window, in the dining-room, open.

The coroner came. As is frequently the case with coroners, his eyes saw much of which his brains took no knowledge. He threw no additional light on the case, and sat down to await the return of the searching policemen.

The lieutenant renewed his talk with Harleigh, asking him why he had not tried to prevent the commission of the crime.

Brumair, excited and worn to the point of exhaustion, began an explanation:

"You must understand that this is an extraordinary case—extraordinary. I had hypnotized Mr. Harleigh in my library. My house is at the corner of Seventeenth and K streets, more than a mile from here. But I sent Mr. Harleigh here while his body remained at my house. That was how he saw the crime without being able to prevent it. It was a triumph for science—a triumph!"

"And I remember every detail—all of it as well as I do how the man looked," added Harleigh.

The lieutenant was at first inclined to believe we were all drunk. Next, he thought we were newspaper men trying to joke him. His opinions were clothed in abusive language, and he was ready to believe anything except our story, which was the truth. Hamilton was raging.

"How do you suppose we knew about it?" he burst out angrily. "What do you think brought us here just after he was killed?"

The question went unanswered, for at that moment there occurred one of those things which make me believe Providence does not always take a hand in the affairs of men. One of the policemen returned to say the murderer had been caught. They had found him coming in an automobile from the direction of the suburbs. He answered the description given by Harleigh, the officer said.

When they brought him in, it was evident that, in a vague sort of way, the description might have fitted him. But Hamilton exclaimed in surprise:

"That's George's chauffeur!"

"He's not the man," said Harleigh curtly.

"He doesn't wear glasses. He has no mole on his upper lip. He has two rings on his left hand. Can't you see he isn't the man?"

Brumair turned back the chauffeur's coat sleeves and looked at his cuff buttons. They bore only the letter "T."

But the police knew they had captured the right man. They found in his pocket a wallet bearing George's initials, and in the wallet were $36. Besides, his only explanation of where he had been was that he liked to ride in the wind and had used his employer's machine for the purpose. The man's protestations of innocence amounted to nothing. His statements that George had given him the wallet and that $35 was not too much money for a chauffeur to carry had no effect. It seemed a weird thing that, though arrested on Harleigh's description, he could not have the benefit of the denial that he was the man.

They held him, and, in due time, he was indicted by the grand jury for murder. The prosecuting attorney laughed at our story quite as heartily as the police lieutenant had done. We begged him to postpone the trial, to give Harleigh a chance to look for the real criminal. We argued that the ringing of the telephone in the Nelson house at the identical moment that Hamilton was calling from the Brumair house was, at least, circumstantial evidence in our favor. Nothing we could say had significance for the prosecuting mind.

Hamilton cursed him bitterly.

On the theory that the real murderer would be irresistibly attracted to the trial, Harleigh attended every session of the court, searching for his man. He never appeared.

The chauffeur, who liked to ride in the wind and couldn't establish an alibi, was hanged by the rules of evidence as they are laid down in the books.

That, however, is not the thing of most importance. Harleigh knows now who the real murderer is. He saw him the other day coming out of the office of a physician famed for his successful treatment of catarrh. He is a bank teller, which accounts for the discoloration of the thumb and forefinger of his right hand. Furthermore, he wears eyeglasses, and he has a mole just below the outside point of his right nostril. His initials are "D. M. C."

But what difference does it make? You can't hang two men for a crime which one of them did not commit.

To do so would make justice appear excessively foolish.

Bill Podden's Luck

By A. P. Garland

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JUDSON, the stout and genial proprietor of the Rose and Anchor, was busily engaged polishing brasses behind the bar when the village postman, with his customary air of importance, came through the open door.

"Nothing for you today, Mr. Judson. One for William Podden, Esquire. Fancy calling old Bill Podden 'squire!' Got a furrin' stamp on it, likely one of them there German 'steries. Fat lot they'll get out of it!" And in a disdainful manner, he carelessly laid a large, imposing-looking letter on the wet counter and continued his rounds.

Sam Judson merely nodded in reply. It was early in the afternoon of a sweltering day in June, and the hostelry was guiltless of customers, and his corpulence forbade any unnecessary exertion. He continued his task, and it was not till a few drowsy flies, evidently sated with ale, had settled down for a siesta on the missive that his eyes were attracted to it.

He picked it up carelessly, and, making his way into the little parlor, which lay at the rear of the shop, placed it on a glass ornament that decorated the mantelpiece. Mrs. Judson, equal if not superior to him in bulk, looked up from the armchair where she had been having a nap.

"What's that, Sam?" she asked.

"Only a letter for old Podden, addressed 'care of Rose and Anchor, Slodby, Berkshire, England.' Comes from Germany or somewhere."

"I like his cheek, gettin' letters sent here. What next, I wonder?" she retorted, rising and proceeding to examine the cause of her indignation.

"It's from America—Germany, indeed! Can't I see with my own two eyes the name on the postmark? Who does he know in America?"

"Why, he's always braggin' about his brother Joe. Says he made a fortune in the harness-trade."

"Oh, I've heard them tales before," she replied, turning the letter over as if to glean some idea as to its contents. To her surprise she noted that the flap was insecurely fastened, as the gum had failed to hold. She inserted her large forefinger timidly, and a slight pressure left the envelope open and untorn.

"Oh, Sam! Look here! It's open."

"Just like you, doing something silly. Don't you know you can be 'ad up for that?"

"Who's going to know? Can't I stick it up again easy enough? But now it's open we might as well see wot's in it."

Her husband shook his head solemnly, as if to indicate his disapproval, but nevertheless produced his spectacles and placed them carefully on his nose. Mrs. Judson, meanwhile, lingeringly drew forth the letter, and, spreading it out, allowed him to join her in perusing the missive. It ran as follows:

80 Broad Street, Boston.
June 15, 1908.

Dear Sir:

I regret to inform you that your brother, Joseph Podden, died here on Tuesday last, June 9th. Before his death he instructed me to draw up his will, whereby you are named as sole legatee to his estate, the value whereof I estimate to be two hundred thousand dollars, or, in your currency, forty thousand pounds (£40,000).

A few weeks must elapse before all the legal formalities can be gone through in order to have the property realized, but, as soon as this is done, I shall myself proceed to England to hand you over the proceeds.

Your obedient servant,
HIRAM FLOOKER.

Sheer amazement held the worthy couple spellbound for a moment. They could hardly believe their eyes.

"Bill Podden!"

"Forty thousand pounds!"

"Well, I never did. It can't be true."

They re-read the document carefully to make sure there was no mistake.

"Fancy that, now," said Sam bitterly; "here's me been slavin' day in, day out, by the sweat o' my brow—all for nowt, as I might say, and that there Bill Podden—owes me one-and-eight pence 'appeny—who spends 'arf 'is time cadgin' drinks, becomes a millionaire for life. Is that fair and just, I'd like to know?"

He glared around as if seeking an adversary willing to controvert his statement.

"Don't be a fool, Sam Judson," retorted his better and bigger half; "you'd best go and see Bill Podden before he knows about the letter. Else some other folks will get 'old of 'im. I'll gum up the envelope, so as 'e won't know nowt about it bein' opened."

Sam seemed struck with the wisdom of her remark. "That's right, Liz; I'd better go at once. There's lots of folks in the village as would take advantage of a 'armless, good-natured chap like Bill. But 'e'll find a true friend in me," he added loftily.

He wiped his face carefully, turned down his shirt-sleeves, and then proceeded by the aid of a buttonhook to fasten the two lowest buttons of his ample vest. Mrs. Judson meanwhile set to work regumming the envelope-flap and fastening the letter. This done, she was helping her husband to don his coat, when, to her surprise, she saw Bill Podden coming along the road past the house.

"There 'e is," she cried; "go and stand at the door and ask 'im in. After a bit, I'll remember to tell 'im about the letter."

The object of their interest was meanwhile progressing in his customary languid manner. He was between forty and fifty years of age, with a homely, sunburned, clean-shaven face, scanty black hair, and cunning little black eyes. He had been nicknamed Artful Bill, possibly on account of the fact that he managed to exist on a little unambitious poaching and an occasional day's employment, but more likely because his reputation for obtaining alcoholic refreshments at other people's expense was a byword in the village.

As he came by the door of the Rose and Anchor he looked thirstily inward, when he beheld the proprietor beckoning him with a smile that had hitherto been lacking in their interviews.

"Afternoon, Mr. Judson."

"Afternoon, Bill. 'Ot, ain't it? Won't you come in and 'ave a drop of something cool?"

A look of gratification came over Bill's face as he followed his host into the shop.

"Come into the parlor. It's cooler there. Liz, here's your old friend Bill come to see you."

The lady's smile was expansive and cheery, in strong contrast to the stony glare with which she had hitherto been wont to reply to his request for sundry pints on credit.

"Glad to see you, Mr. Podden. 'Ow 'ave you been keepin'? You're lookin' splendid, ain't 'e, Sam?"

"Tip-top, Liz. Doesn't look a day over twenty-five, does 'e? What'll you 'ave, Bill? I've got a noo barrel up from the cellar that's cool as ice. Fetch us a jugful and some glasses, Liz."

The liquid was soon procured, and, the glasses having been filled, the visitor did justice to his reputation as a consumer. When the vessels had several times been refilled Sam produced a large box of cigars, the cover of which depicted a goddess, innocent of attire, dancing lightly over the heads of a number of bandits in a field of cabbage.

"Try one o' them, Bill. You'll find that a cigar worth smoking. Real 'Avanas—cost me four shillings for fifty 'olesale."

The visitor was now comfortably ensconced in an easy chair, reveling in the unwonted luxury, when Mrs. Judson decided to hasten matters a little.

"Oh! that reminds me. There's a letter for you, Mr. Podden. Come 'alf an hour ago."

She took the fateful epistle from behind the clock and handed it timidly to their esteemed guest.

He opened it carelessly, as if accustomed to receive such things every day, and proceeded to read it leisurely.

Sam had just time to exchange a comprehensive glance with his wife, when Bill rose so suddenly as to upset all the glasses on the table.

"Jerusalem!" he shouted. "I've fallen in for a forchin. My brother Joe that went to the States 'as died and left me thirty thousand pounds."

"Forty thousand, isn't it," Mr. Podden?" said the lady unguardedly.

He glanced again at the letter.

"Yes—forty thousand. But how did you know?" he asked suspiciously.

"Dreamt of it night before last. You remember me telling you, Sam, of 'ow I dreamnt that Mr. Podden 'ad been left forty thousand pounds?"

Sam corroborated with almost unnecessary emphasis.

"To think of poor old Joe bein' dead," went on Bill; "one of the best men as ever stood in shoe-leather."

He looked tearful and reminiscent.

"Worth ten chaps like me," he continued sadly.

"Don't say that, Mr. Podden," said Mrs. Judson with sympathy. "Looks isn't everything."

"Wot d'ye mean talkin' o' looks? I ain't talking o' looks."

"Liz don't mean no 'arm, Bill. She don't know wot she's saying. Her 'art's in the right place," interpolated Sam in a soothing manner. "Liz only means as 'ow every eye forms its own beauty. And 'ow it do change! When I was a little boy ladies used to stop their carriages on the road to take me up and kiss me."

Then he added with a note of regret:

"But I've changed a lot since then."

"You 'ave," said Bill with a firmness that Mr. Judson did not like.

Honors being therefore easy, the guest allowed himself to be mollified, and even to sketch out roughly the plans he was going to adopt with regard to his prospective wealth.

"Of course, I'll 'ave to wait for a few weeks before I can make a start, because I 'aven't any money to go on with."

Judson looked inquiringly at his wife. She nodded her head.

"I can let you 'ave five pounds for the present. I couldn't think o' seeing an old friend in a difficulty. That's the sort o' chap I am."

The money being duly handed over, an idea occurred to Mrs. Judson.

"Wouldn't it be better Mr. Podden, if you were to leave that old cottage and come here? We've a nice room upstairs that would suit you."

A little persuasion induced Bill to give his consent, and after having arranged to transfer his quarters that evening he made his way home.

The Judsons were now satisfied that they had made the most of their opportunity, so they saw no reason for concealing the wonderful news any longer.

Consequently, in half an hour the whole village was agog with excitement. The one topic of discussion in Slodby was Bill Podden's fortune, and what he was going to do with it. To the female portion of the community the news came as a godsend. Nothing so interesting had occurred since Boddle, the village constable, had been triumphantly acquitted of a grave charge of wife-beating. There was a coming and going from house to house; an exhaustive discussion of the legacy and its recipient; inevitably concluding with a philosophic exchange of views as to the extent to which riches promoted happiness.

On one point, however, all were agreed. Bill Podden ought to get married.

"Forty thousand pounds and 'im not married—why it's wicked," quoth Mrs. Tutton, the mother of three strapping wenches, free so far from the galling band of matrimony. "Wot 'e wants is a strong, 'ealthy young woman—"

"Not too young," interrupted a spinster defensively.

"A strong, 'ealthy young woman"—went on Mrs. Tutton unmoved—"'oo can look after 'im nice and proper, and nuss 'im when 'e's got rooamatics."

In the meantime Bill Podden had returned to the cottage which he was supposed to rent—the landlord knew better—and began his preparations for migration to the Rose and Anchor. The task was not a difficult one, as excepting the few sticks of battered furniture, he had little or nothing to transport. Hitherto not a soul in the village save himself had even entered the cottage during his occupancy, but now a constant stream of callers approached his door. But to none did he open. To all the repeated knockings, he would merely answer that he was busy, and the visitors had to turn away disappointed.

Foremost among these was the widow Branson the local tobacconist. About three months before, when Podden had first come to settle down in the village, her charms had worked such sad havoc with his impressionable heart that one afternoon, having purchased two pennyworth of shag, he had been emboldened to declare his passion unromantically across the counter. A lump about the size of a pigeon's egg, that still marked his right temple, served to remind him of the dangers of a hasty wooing.

With the news of the legacy came a sudden change of feeling on her part.

"P'raps I was 'ard on 'im," she murmured penitently, and proceeded to don her best attire in order to obtain immediate forgiveness for her forcible methods of rejection. She was all the more chagrined when she found him inaccessible; but, nothing daunted, she sought the hospitality of a cottage close at hand from which she could watch his door.

When he did at last come forth, armed with a carpetbag, a fishing-rod, and a large wicker cage containing a particularly foul-mouthed parrot, half the village seemed waiting for him. Everybody was congratulating him and shaking his hand—the widow being the foremost—so that it was many minutes before he could proceed on his way. But he did not go alone. One individual seized his bag, another his fishing-rod, while two others grasped the cage and were struggling for its possession, when the parrot, scandalized at their behavior, judicially settled the point by carefully nipping the finger of the one who unwisely had grasped the cage by the bars. He let go his hold with an expression that so won the bird's admiration she subsequently added it to her already assorted vocabulary.

The whole procession now moved steadily up the street, headed by Podden, to whom Mrs. Branson had lovingly linked herself, and enlivened by the whistling of popular airs by the village urchins, who were delighted at the opportunity of providing appropriate music.

At the Rose and Anchor, Mr. Judson and his wife were awaiting their guest, and a thrill of horror went through them when they beheld the crowd approaching. At first they imagined that Podden must have got drunk or else met with an accident. But the dignified air with which Boddle, the guardian of the peace, followed the procession, reassured them.

On arriving at the hostelry, Podden made an effort to shake off his uninvited retinue by hastening with his property into the little parlor aforesaid. About half a dozen made their way to the bar-counter, evidently awaiting an invitation to drink. Mrs. Branson, however, thought herself privileged to enter the inner sanctum. Judson made an ineffectual effort to stop her, but his worthy spouse came to the rescue. She and Mrs. Branson had a long-standing feud that needed settlement.

"An' may I ask, Mrs. Branson, where you're going?" she said with marked politeness.

"I want to see my Bill."

"Your what?"

"Bill Podden—we're as good as engaged."

"Engaged. 'E 'asn't taken on no servants yet. Any 'ow, you're too old."

The double insult was too much for the amorous widow.

"Too old, you fat 'eap. That's a lie, Liz Judson, and you know it. I'm younger'n 'e is."

"Wouldn't 'ave thought it. But looks is always deceptive."

"Are you going to let me in?"

"Settingly not. You 'aven't been asked into my 'ouse, not as I knows of. Mr. Podden is goin' to live with us for the present."

"You're a pair of thieves, that's wot you are. Want to get 'old of poor Bill's bit o' money. I know you—"

But here the bulky landlady decided that the matter had gone far enough.

"Run for Mr. Boddle," she said to a little urchin that was enjoying the altercation from the open window. "I'll give this woman in charge for creating a disturbance on licensed premises."

Daunted by this move, Mrs. Branson retreated, murmuring fearful threats against her antagonist.

That evening the average nightly receipts of the Rose and Anchor were nearly trebled. All the male adult residents of Slodby seemed to be present, much to the detriment of the Waggoner, the opposition hostelry at the other end of the village. Every family had at least one representative anxious to display his good will toward the heir, who, now for the first time, was tasting the sweets of popularity. The most open-handed offers were made to him of loans of money, etc., pending the realization of his fortune.

Bill's manner fitted the occasion perfectly. He was naturally elated, but most genial and friendly. So far was he from being purse-proud that he accepted drinks and smokes at the expense of all and sundry without qualms. But when he offered to defray the cost of a round, it was "Not at all." "Ave this with me, Bill," or "Give us a chance, Mr. Podden," until ultimately he gave up trying. Ere the gathering broke up, he had shaken hands at least three times with every one of the visitors, and had in one or two cases shed tears that came, as he said, from a "too full 'eart."

The next few mornings he spent in visiting privately nearly all his well-wishers. There was little need of anything more than a subtle suggestion, and immediately a loan was forthcoming.

Four days later he announced his intention of going up to London to see a firm of solicitors he knew that would manage his affairs for him. He was also in need of a suit of mourning to replace his present attire, which he had got on loan from the local hay-dealer.

On the day of his departure, a large crowd assembled at the station. Everybody pressed around to shake his hand or offer advice. In answer to cries of "Speech!" he spoke a few touching words.

"Friends—I ain't used to making speeches, but before I go I want to say as 'ow I'm proud of 'aving such a lot o' honest friends. Me 'eart is too full to say no more. But I know 'ow you'll all be glad to see me back in Slodby."

The applause that answered his speech almost held back the incoming train.

All gazed at his beaming, benevolent face framed in the window of the carriage, as he was carried slowly away to the metropolis.

That evening in the smoking-room of a public house at Islington he wrote the following:

Dear Joe:

Kem off all right. I enclose £[illegible] wich is your share of the [illegible]. Next letter will be to Devonshire, where I'm goin' next week. I will write an' tell you where to send the usual.

Your loving brother,
BILL.

Bill was right. They will be glad to see him again at Slodby.